interview, PM Blair had also said, "Most people recognise...that there cannot be any place for the type of terrorist acts, killing innocent civilians, that we have seen in the past few weeks." Subsequently, Prime Minister Tony Blair personally clarified that his informal remarks on Pakistan's position on Kashmir had been quoted out of context. What he had said was that even if a country has a strong position on certain issues such as Kashmir, there can never be any justification for terrorism. In an interview on 6 January, PM Blair said India also has a "very strong view" on Kashmir.

(c) Government of India also subscribes to the view that no political cause can be used to justify terrorism. Government position is principled and clear. The entire State of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. A part of the territory of the State is under the forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan. India is committed to resolve all outstanding issues with Pakistan peacefully through direct bilateral dialogue as envisaged under the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

(d) Prime Minister Blair's visit was extremely successful and helped in the overall consolidation and improvement of bilateral political and economic ties.

Export of software to Pakistan and Taliban

830. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it had come to Government's notice sometime back that a Bangalore based Chinese software firm has been exporting software to Pakistan and Taliban prejudicial to the country's security interest;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Government is not aware of any Bangalore based Chinese software fiirm exporting software to Pakistan or to the Taliban.

Regional cooperation on economic development in North Eastern Region

831. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the various efforts made by Government and consequent response of

the neighbouring countries in the process of restoration of peace in the North-Eastern Region as well as control of cross border drugs and arms trafficking;

(b) the efforts for regional cooperation on economic development and country-wise response for promotion of border trade to substitute illegal trade including drugs and arms being considered for Joint Venture Project with Myanmar;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the list of joint venture economic activities, investment made by Government in those countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The Government of India has strengthened relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar through a policy of good neighbourly cooperation and constructive engagement. Our concern over anti-India activities by agencies/organisations inimical to India's interests including the ISI has been conveyed to the Government of Bangladesh. Regular discussions for strengthening cooperation to prevent such illegal activities are held between the Foreign Secretaries, Home Secretaries, DGs BSF and BDR and in the Joint Working Group between India and Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Government has stated that it will not allow undesirable elements to use its territory for activities prejudicial to the security interest of India. The issues of cross-border smuggling including arms and drug trafficking are being addressed through these institutional mechanisms.

The Governments of India and Myanmar have also set up various institutional mechanisms whereby regular dialogue is maintained on border issues and security-related matters, maintaining peace and tranquility along the border and to prevent all illegal activities including trans-border movement of insurgents and narco-traffickers. The institutionalised mechanisms include meetings between Foreign Secretaries, National Level Meetings, Sectoral Level Meetings and Border Liaison Meeting.

(b) There is ongoing dialogue both at the political and operational level for encouraging cooperation for economic development with Bangladesh and Myanmar under SAARC and BIMST-EC respectively. To promote border trade between India and Bangladesh the two countries have agreed to set up a joind group of experts to look into the issue. In the case of Myanmar, border trade occurs through the border trading point of Tamu-Moreh. There are on-going

discussions with Myanmar to increase the number of border trade points between the two countries.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) A number of Indo-Myanmar cross-border projects in the area of infrastructure development, energy and gas exploration, oceanography, space applications etc. are currently at various stages of operation. In addition, India has extended a credit line of US$ 15 million to Myanmar.

To promote cross-border infrastructural linkages with Bangladesh the Dhaka-Kolkata bus service, inaugurated in 1999 has been started. In addition, agreements have been signed for running passenger train services between the two countries. There are several joint ventures in the private sector. Government of India has also extended a credit line of Rs. 200 crores to the Government of Bangladesh.

Rehabilitation of minorities in Bangladesh

832. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sometime back the Vishwa Hindu Parishad demanded that Government should take up with the Government of Bangladesh the question of providing a homeland out of its territory for the rehabilitation of the Hindu who were recently subjected to extreme atrocities;

(b) if so, the details of the representation submitted by the VHP to the Ministry of External Affairs in their Memorandum;

(c) what action has been taken/proposed to be taken with regard thereto; and

(d) what further steps are proposed to be taken to safeguard interest of the Hindu minorities in Bangladesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.